

Herbal First Aid

It's important to acknowledge that Western medicine excels in Emergency First Aid, and this information is in no way intended to replace a visit to your physician or emergency room when appropriate. It will, however, allow you to help heal life's bumps and bruises. And of course, there is no replacement for a healing hug provided at the same time as the remedy!

Glossary:

Tincture: herbal extract preserved in alcohol

Infusion: herbal tea steeped for 4 hours or more

Decoction: a tea which is boiled with the herb in it for a specified period

Poultice: a soft, wet mass applied to the site of pain or injury

Abrasions and Minor Cuts

- ◆ Creating a fuss makes any injury seem worse, so limit the drama involved.
- ◆ To help with minor shock, apply 2-4 drops of Rescue Remedy (a Bach Flower Remedy) under the tongue, or one tablet of Homeopathic Arnica. Your patient will immediately breathe easier, which simplifies your job of treating them.
- ◆ Clean the area with an herbal antiseptic to prevent infection and aid healing. Let 4-5 drops of any of the following tinctures sit in a little (1-2 tsp.) hot water for a minute or two before applying: St. John's wort, calendula, thyme, witch hazel, or goldenseal. An ointment called Traumeel has a derivative of St. John's wort in it and is helpful for injuries.
- ◆ Use a few drops of the following essential oils (EO) in hot water; they are antiseptic, pain-relieving, and healing: lavender, eucalyptus, peppermint, tea tree.
- ◆ If the cut is quite deep, apply pressure to the area to stop bleeding. A little yarrow tincture in hot water applied to this will act as a hemostatic. If the sides are gaping open, bring them together firmly with finger and thumb. Bind the wound with surgical tape, cover the dressing and bandage, and seek medical advice quickly. If concerned about infection, honey can be applied directly to the wound before bandaging it to prevent infection. It absorbs moisture which few bacteria can live without.
- ◆ If the cut or abrasion is relatively minor, it is best left uncovered.

Bites and Stings

Dog Bites: Treat for shock if necessary, as outlined above. Cleanse the area in running water. Apply antiseptic herbs or oils.

- ◆ A poultice of fennel seed tea will draw out the poison.

You can also bind cabbage or violet leaves over the bite. Cover with cotton bandages and between changes, bathe it with a few drops of rosemary EO in a little hot water.

Caution: Dog, cat, and especially human bites, can require antibiotic treatment. If the wound is deep, seek medical advice on tetanus. And always check on current rabies vaccinations for pet bites.

Insect Bites:

To relieve swelling and pain, prevent infection, and promote healing, use any of the following: pulp of raw onion or garlic, cucumber juice, lavender EO, fresh lemon juice, distilled witch hazel, crushed basil leaves, rosemary EO, eucalyptus EO, or melissa EO. Remove a bee sting by pressing it out sideways with a thumbnail rather than pulling to avoid pressing in more poison. Apply soda water, honey, or baking soda to neutralize the acid of the poison.

Any bites are relieved by applying garlic, cucumber juice, or raw onion. For mosquito bites, lavender EO, witch hazel, cider vinegar, sliced onion, fresh lemon juice, fennel seed tea, or crushed basil. To relieve a jelly fish sting apply: alcohol, vinegar, ammonia, or papaya.

Caution: If there is a known allergy to bees, adrenaline should be given immediately. If there is very rapid swelling that starts to affect the lips, tongue, throat, and therefore, breathing, this is an emergency. Take the patient to the hospital!

Bruises and Sprains

Sprains occur when the ligaments around joints, such as wrists and ankles, over-stretch and sometimes even tear. The following will help:

- ◆ The first 24-48 hours, use ice packs; a package of frozen peas or blueberries is ideal. The sooner you can get ice on the injury, the better.
- ◆ Apply cold compresses (underneath the icepack) for half an hour to contain bruising. Any of the following will be useful in a compress: distilled witch hazel, arnica, calendula, yarrow, St. John's wort (use 1-2 t. of tincture in a little water). Or you can place the inner side of a banana peel directly on the bruise.
- ◆ Take the same remedy internally; 90 drops (3 droppers) in a little water immediately, then 30 drops every 2-4 hours.
- ◆ Support the sprained joint with a bandage, 'ace' or otherwise
- ◆ Rest! Let your body use your energy for healing, rather than busyness
- ◆ Consult your physician if the pain has not considerably improved after 24 hours, as the underlying bone may be broken.

Burns and Scalds

These can safely be safely dealt with at home if only a small area is affected and only the top layer of skin is burned. If burns become more painful, or infected, consult your practitioner. Do not puncture burn blisters.

- ◆ Immediately immerse the area in very cold water for at least ten minutes or until the pain subsides.
- ◆ Every 15 minutes apply one of the following to minimize swelling and prevent infection: undiluted lavender EO, vitamin E oil, comfrey ointment, aloe vera juice, witch hazel compress, the grated pulp of half a raw potato, stiffly beaten egg white, grated carrots or leeks, melon flesh, black tea.
- ◆ Keep the affected area slightly raised to slow the blood flow and ease pain.
- ◆ Once the pain has diminished, cover loosely with a clean, dry dressing. Avoid fluffy material which may stick to the burn.

Cold Sores/Fever Blisters

These are caused by the herpes simplex virus; often brought on by mental or physical stress, being run down, menstruation, or excessive sun. Scratching or rubbing spreads the virus and can lead to bacterial infection. The virus lives permanently in the nerve endings of many adults and children.

- ◆ If repetitive, take 1000 mg of L-Lysine daily as a preventative measure. Lysine is also found in chicken, beans and bean sprouts, and most vegetables and fruits.
- ◆ Reduce foods high in the amino acid arginine which predisposes to the virus. Included are gelatin, carob, oats, soybeans, wheatgerm. Chocolate, coconut, peanuts and wheat flour.
- ◆ Boost your immune system with plenty of garlic and foods rich in vitamin C, B vitamins, magnesium, bioflavonoids, and calcium.
- ◆ Get plenty of exercise to stimulate the lymph system.
- ◆ Provide support internally with these herbs: echinacea, usnea, cleavers, plantain, bayberry, burdock, nettle, calendula, dandelion root, licorice, and goldenseal.
- ◆ Externally you can use melissa EO, lavender EO, eucalyptus EO, calendula, myrrh, and goldenseal tinctures.

Refrain from kissing when you have cold sores :) and use separate facecloths and towels from those of other members of the family.

Hay Fever

- ◆ Start enhancing your immune system at least two months prior to the season by taking Siberian ginseng, echinacea, and eating some comb honey daily (unless you're allergic to bee stings).
- ◆ When symptoms first appear, fast for 1-2 days on fruit and water. Use a mist tent with a few drops of melissa, eucalyptus, or chamomile EO.
- ◆ During and just prior to the season, the following herbs can be helpful: echinacea, chamomile, goldenrod, eyebright, nettle, or yarrow.

- ◆ Eliminating dairy products, wheat, or both can be helpful.
- ◆ Take extra vitamin C, zinc, vitamin A, and calcium.

Headaches

If you have headaches often, consult your practitioner.

- ◆ The essential oils of lavender, rosemary, or peppermint can be massaged into the head at the site of the pain. Use these same essential oils as inhalants or compresses.
- ◆ The following herbs can be taken in tincture or tea form: willow, chamomile, peppermint, rosemary, linden blossom, feverfew, skullcap, lavender, jamaica dogwood root bark, hops, skullcap, vervain
- ◆ Feverfew and chamomile are especially good for migraines, but it's best to work with a practitioner to determine the cause of the migraines.

Nosebleeds

Nosebleeds which occur after a blow to the head may be a sign of a fracture; seek medical help immediately! If nosebleeds happen often, consult your practitioner.

The usual cause of nosebleeds is the rupture of blood vessels on the inner surface of the nose, brought on by hard nose blowing, sneezing, a knock, a foreign body, or infection. Excess dryness also can be a contributing factor.

- ◆ Hold the sides of the nose firmly together just under the bony part, well above the nostrils, for five to six minutes to allow a clot to form. When the bleeding stops, don't blow or sniff.
- ◆ Apply a cold compress to the back and sides of the neck; lean the head forward.
- ◆ Calendula tincture or oil of cypress on cotton wool will quickly stop a nosebleed. Hold it under the nose and gently sniff. Other astringents which stop bleeding are yarrow and St. John's wort.
- ◆ Extra bioflavonoids and vitamin C strengthen capillary walls.

Shock

There are two kinds of shock: emotional shock which accompanies bad news and deep stress, and medical shock which follows trauma such as a car accident.

- ◆ For the first type of shock, take 10-20 drops of arnica tincture stirred in a glass of water, or homeopathic arnica tablets. Rescue Remedy is also appropriate. A little cayenne pepper in water is also helpful, or try teas or tinctures of lemon balm, chamomile, or skullcap.
- ◆ Medical shock following serious injury requires urgent medical attention, though both arnica and Rescue Remedy are useful if there is no possibility of internal injury. Cover the patient with a blanket and check for any blockages to their breathing while waiting for an ambulance.

Splinters

Never ignore splinters, as the wound may become infected. Seek medical assistance if the splinter is large, especially if it is glass.

- ◆ Use an antiseptic herb to wash the area; diluted goldenseal, St. John's wort, or calendula.
- ◆ Try to pull the splinter out with tweezers. Sterilize a fine needle in a flame and use it to ease out the splinter.
- ◆ Heat can help draw them out; apply a hot poultice made with slippery elm, comfrey ointment, bread, and bran.
- ◆ If the wound becomes infected, treat with crushed garlic, *not* in contact with the skin, but wrapped in a cloth then used as a bandage. Leave it for two days, then replace daily.
- ◆ Alternatively in cases of infection you can apply calendula tincture, or the essential oils of lavender, lemon, or tea tree.

Sunburn

Look out for symptoms of sunstroke (dizziness, nausea, weakness, and fever, often with a severe headache) when treating sunburn. If you suspect sunstroke, consult a practitioner.

- ◆ Relieve the pain by taking a cool bath with a few drops of lavender EO added. Apply Rescue Remedy cream when the skin is dry.
- ◆ Other topical treatments include fresh cucumber juice, goat's milk with a little honey, or buttermilk and honey.
- ◆ Infusions of the following may be taken as cold teas and used for bathing the area: nettle, chickweed, calendula, peppermint, and chamomile.
- ◆ to relieve soreness and burning: calendula tincture mixed with olive oil, diluted nettle tincture, aloe vera juice, fresh live yogurt, soda water.

Toothache

If the pain is caused by a cavity, apply a little clove EO until you can see your dentist. Yarrow, peppermint, or dried hops taken as infusions (teas) will also soothe the pain.

Travel Sickness

Look at the horizon, outside the vehicle, to confirm via the eyes that the world is indeed moving underneath you. Don't read and get plenty of fresh air. Ginger is excellent for nausea, so chew fresh ginger root or crystallized ginger (which is almost like candy!), drink ginger beer or ginger tea, or take ginger tincture as needed.

Notes:

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